

# Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies

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Volume 4 | Issue 1

Article 9

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2016

**Review of Stauffer, Romaine. 2014. *The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship*. Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. Pp. 145.**

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## Recommended Citation

Anderson, Jennifer. 2016. "Review of Stauffer, Romaine. 2014. *The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship*. Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. Pp. 145." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 4(1):116-18.

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letters, diaries, and memoirs, but only as much as someone is willing to reveal or able to articulate. What happened in those two years that Johan A. Theissen (42) failed to write in his journal? What questions, concerns, and uncertainties could not be written down, knowing the letters would be shared with many communities? These kinds of questions may never be answered, but perhaps they speak to the complexity of understanding of Mennonite culture and imaginings of a transnational “village.”

As captivating as it is unsettling in recounting the transnational experiences of living within the world, yet outside of the nation-state, Royden Loewen’s book is both an accessible and invaluable text. Replete with engaging personal stories of varied experiences, he paints a vivid picture of the difficulties and countless challenges the diasporic Old Colony Mennonites faced each day as it tracks three generations across varied spaces and geographies. Providing a glimpse into the multifaceted lives of these people, *Village among Nations* importantly takes us through the shifting political and economic climate of nation-states and its effects on a vibrant and often misunderstood people. This important work provides a rich understanding of alternative visions of transnationalism and identity making within and without the nation-state.

## Reference

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, England: Versa.

Review of Stauffer, Romaine. 2014. *The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship*. Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship. Pp. 145.

By Jennifer Anderson

In 2012, Mid-Atlantic Fellowship (MAF)—a conservative Mennonite group rooted in southeastern Pennsylvania—felt a need to document the history of the constituency before many of the charter members of the church passed on. The result is a handsome, full-color, hardcover volume of 145 pages of church, ministerial, and ministry program profiles, with full-color photos of church buildings, active and former ministry, and some snapshots of mission ministry activities. The book is broken into four sections: the history of the Mid-Atlantic Fellowship, profiles of each church (the congregation and its current and former ministers), MAF choruses, and MAF ministries.

The history, which is all too brief, begins with the Anabaptist movement, then jumps to the division between Lancaster Mennonite Conference and the Weaverland Mennonite Conference (Old Order) in the late 1800s, then to the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church division with Lancaster Mennonite Conference in the late 1960s, and then finally the Mid-Atlantic beginnings from the Eastern Church, with Bishop Homer Bomberger leading out in the early 1970s. The Mid-Atlantics felt the Easterns upon leaving Lancaster Conference were

becoming too strict and sought a path between the two. From there, the history depicts an explosion of Mid-Atlantic churches in various localities. At the end of the history, it mentions ministries and stats of MAF. In essence, the history section is but an overview of the entire book.

The second section is the bulk of the book which begins with an open-ended summary about each church's history and present activities. The rest of each church's entry is a profile of the ministers and their family. Information in the profiles include the couple's church origin, their call to ministry, hobbies and occupations, their children, and occasionally where they have transferred if they are no longer within the fellowship.

In section three, the book discusses former choruses and the current regional youth choruses. Each chorus gets a paragraph or so describing their work, the recordings that were made, influential people, and the participants.

The last part of the book mentions Mid-Atlantic ministries. All of the ministries, except one, are to encourage and build up current members and leadership through counseling, books, and tent-type inspirational meetings. The final ministry, which is a children's Bible club ministry, is mainly facilitated by youth in a micropolitan area as an outlet for youth to do local mission work under the guidance of the ordained.

The History of Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship serves as a good introduction to the present identity of the Mid-Atlantic Mennonites. It captures the spirit and battle-cry of this conservative Mennonite fellowship seeped in revivalist phraseology, of carrying the banner of Christ and proclaiming the Gospel. It also accurately depicts the ministers (as opposed to the laity) as the cogs and core of Mid-Atlantic that keep the fellowship on the straight and narrow. However, saying this, it certainly reflects more the spirit of older and previous generations than the current. Yet, this book can still serve as a reminder of the vision of why Mid-Atlantic started, possibly to reboot the spirit of the fellowship's origins as it faces its third and fourth generations.

The book was compiled and printed in a short amount of time, which crippled some of the rich value of the book. Among conservative Mennonites, Romaine Stauffer is known for her detailed historical writings. Yet, in the case of this work, she misses some important specifics of Mid-Atlantic history, such as the large influx of Weaverland Mennonite Conference members (Old Order) in the years after it began (more members today would trace their roots to Weaverland transfers in the years after Mid-Atlantic started than to the Eastern Church or Lancaster Conference). This unacknowledged development explains much of the church boom, but, by leaving these details out, it looks as if people were flocking to the churches from all over. While many were coming to the Mid-Atlantic to "receive truth," the undercurrent of Mid-Atlantic being a home for ex-Weaverland members more than anything else is carefully bypassed. Mid-Atlantic has basically become a progressive step up for ex-Weaverland members, not Eastern. In the history, Stauffer instead focuses heavily on the genesis of Mid-Atlantic being conflict over material lines within the newly established Eastern Church.

Being a fellowship whose history is largely in receiving ex-members from an Old Order plain Mennonite counterpart, such a history is, granted, difficult to write when the book is intended to celebrate the Mid-Atlantic churches, not critically assess their history. Stauffer does use some of her skill in prose to suggest a current of dissatisfaction and restlessness without openly reporting it (moods anymore characteristic of many affiliations). While Stauffer attempts to present a fairly sterile reading of the Mid-Atlantic story, concerns and internal differences through the Fellowship's history and even to today remain hidden, though they are critical to understanding MAF's development and growth. Such narratives, though not easy to write, depict who a people are with much more meat and openness and can still be told in a way that is respectful on all sides. This book is not that, nor does it try to be.

Beyond the history, the book is basically a compilation of profiles. Stauffer leans heavily on reporting the word-for-word profiles ministers submitted, some of which is used verbatim without careful editing or consistent rephrasing to third person. This tattletales a bit on the project's time-crunch, unfortunate given the book's otherwise beautiful layout.

One is left wishing more time would have been dedicated to creating an in-depth history, adding interesting details and snippets about the post-revivalist era (such as the defining impact of tent meetings on Lancaster Conference that carried through to the MAF), attempting to draw some conclusions as to what actually happened beyond the textbook explanation of Mid-Atlantic's origins and developments.

For those who are Mid-Atlantic, *The History* serves as a unifying work to synthesize the current generation of Mid-Atlantic leadership and some overview of Mid-Atlantic's beginnings. As the charter members pass on, the book serves as evidence of the original vision and cadence of the church, with apparent hope that that beat will continue. The book also serves as a quick reference to Mid-Atlantic ministry and churches, and for those interested in a more analytical history, a careful combing of ministerial and church profiles hints at some deeper trends and patterns not explicitly mentioned otherwise (as with the surprising amount of ministerial turnover). Researchers looking at the history of Mid-Atlantic will have to put a lot of such fragments of information together to draw some sort of tentative conclusions.

Review of Nolt, Steven. 2015. *A History of the Amish* [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]. New York, NY: Good Books. Pp. 406.

By Dorothy Pratt, *University of South Carolina*

In recent years, the Amish have become surprisingly popular in American culture. Books, television shows, and movies expose the curious to a relatively unknown religious sect, though most of these productions have little to do with the real lives of the Amish. Twenty years ago a very young man from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Steven Nolt, produced a well-documented